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THE EFFECT OF POVERTY ON BEGGING BEHAVIOR: A REVIEW OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGY AND ISLAMIC GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING APPROACHES

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Abstract

Begging remains a complex social issue that continues to challenge public order, social welfare, and human dignity. This problem is closely associated with poverty, limited access to education, and the influence of individuals' social environments. This study aims to describe the characteristics of begging behavior, identify its triggering factors, analyze its impacts, and propose intervention strategies through an Islamic Guidance and Counseling approach integrated with behavior modification techniques. A qualitative descriptive-analytical method was employed to examine the internal and external dimensions of begging behavior. The findings indicate that begging arises from the interaction between individual internal conditions and external social influences. Internal factors include irrational thinking, dependency tendencies, and limited understanding of religious values, whereas external factors include structural poverty, limited employment opportunities, and a cultural environment that allows or supports begging practices. The phenomenon negatively affects public order, reduces environmental comfort, and reinforces long-term dependence on assistance from others. The study concludes that comprehensive intervention should involve strengthening religious awareness, correcting erroneous thought patterns, developing positive habits, and

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reinforcing spiritual values. These findings contribute to the study of social pathology and Islamic counseling by demonstrating that an integrated Islamic Guidance and Counseling and behavior modification approach can help individuals develop independence, work motivation, self-worth, and human dignity, thereby reducing dependence on begging.

Keywords: Behavior Modification; Begging Behavior; Islamic Guidance and Counseling; Social Pathology; Spiritual Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Humans naturally desire a prosperous life—sufficiency, fulfillment of needs, a decent standard of living, and sustained happiness—but reality shows that many fail to achieve this due to unfavorable socioeconomic conditions. A concrete example is the prevalence of begging, which reflects poverty, limited employment opportunities, mental health disorders, violence and exploitation, coupled with social discrimination against jobs considered lowly (Ramadhan, 2024). In this context, Islamic guidance and counseling play an important role with an integrated approach that not only addresses psychological aspects but also spiritual, moral, and social aspects, helping individuals develop their natural potential through internalizing the values of the Qur'an and Hadith so that they can face life's problems constructively (Sukatin et al., 2026).

Poverty and begging behavior are understood as social pathologies: dysfunctional social structures that make individuals unable to meet their living needs; habitus theory (Bourdieu) explains that thought patterns, attitudes, and actions are formed by the socio-economic environment, so that structural poverty and inequality encourage the habit of begging as a survival strategy (Sridiyatmika, 2018). Meanwhile, limited access to education, employment, and resources reinforces the marginalization that drives begging. The phenomenon of begging in Indonesia remains complex and evolving—including new forms such as online begging—demonstrating technological adaptation while remaining rooted in socio-economic problems(Thamrin et al., 2024). The existence and increasing numbers of beggars in big cities reflect the inequality in welfare and the fact that welfare programs have not fully addressed the roots of poverty (Arista & Rahmah, 2025).

Poverty is a major factor directly correlated with the rise of beggars. Data shows that in 2024, the number of poor people in Indonesia will still reach approximately 24.06 million (±8.57%), indicating that this problem remains significant (BPS, 2025). Low per capita

expenditure is a key indicator of poverty, leading individuals of low economic status to seek alternative means of survival, including begging (Mahdiyah, 2023). Therefore, the higher the poverty rate, the greater the potential for an increase in the number of beggars. Poverty is not the only factor contributing to begging. Besides weak economic conditions, there are structural factors such as physical limitations (disabilities), limited formal employment opportunities, and low levels of education that limit skills. The social environment and networks that support begging, as well as the culture of giving, also perpetuate this practice and create a cycle of dependency. Economic pressure, low education, and the dominance of the informal sector are the main drivers of begging (Agyemang et al., 2024).

There are also internal factors originating within the individual. One of these is a dependency mentality, which is the tendency to rely on the mercy of others rather than strive for independence. It is often related to low work motivation, which can arise from experiences of failure, lack of opportunities, or long-established habits. Habits, or habitus, also play a significant role. Individuals who grow up in environments where begging is commonplace tend to internalize these patterns as normal. Habitus theory explains that repeated social conditions shape a person's thought patterns and actions. In this context, prolonged poverty can foster a sense of resignation, making begging a rational choice in a limited situation (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014).

Previous research consistently shows that poverty is the main factor causing begging behavior, which is categorized as a social pathology. Research by Susanti et al. (2025) in Medan found that begging and scavenging are not free choices but rather survival strategies due to economic pressures, low education, lack of identity documents, limited access to employment, and weak social support with very low incomes of IDR 5,000–IDR 40,000 per day, reflecting extreme poverty. Mahdiyah's (2023) literature review links this phenomenon to Oscar Lewis's theory of the culture of poverty, in which poverty has become a lower cultural stratum, especially in urban Indonesia, due to urban growth that has not led to increased public facilities and employment opportunities. Ramadhan (2024), in his research in Sei Buluh Village, found that beggars face negative stigma but capitalize on poverty as social capital for survival. Research by Badiah et al. (2022) in Bandar Lampung found that poverty negatively impacts the initial causes of social deviations, such as theft, gambling, and propaganda, due to economic pressures. From a solution perspective, Lestari et al. (2022) showed that Islamic counseling based on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) can increase beggars' self-awareness by transforming irrational thoughts into rational ones, deepening faith, and maximizing the potential of human nature in accordance with the

Qur'an and Sunnah. Muzaki and Saputra's (2019) research also emphasized that Islamic counseling aims to help individuals realize themselves as whole human beings through empowering their physical, spiritual, nafs, and faith-based nature. These two approaches complement each other: social pathology explains the roots of structural and cultural problems, while Islamic guidance and counseling offer spiritually based curative and preventive solutions for the rehabilitation of beggars.

In response to these problems, researchers offer a solution-oriented perspective through an Islamic Guidance and Counseling approach. The main objective of this research is to change individuals' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors to become independent, productive, and to develop high self-esteem. It is done through the stages of implementing Islamic guidance and counseling: awareness, cognitive restructuring, behavioral modification, and spiritual strengthening. Given the complexity of these problems, current management tends to be administrative and repressive, focusing on reorganization and physical training alone without addressing the mental and spiritual roots of the problem. However, transforming an individual's behavior to free themselves from the habit of begging requires a shift in mindset and the development of a strong character (Munawaroh & Ichsan, 2024). Therefore, an alternative scientific approach, such as Islamic Guidance and Counseling, is considered highly appropriate and strategic to implement as a more humanistic and sustainable solution (Salamuddin et al., 2025).

Islamic counseling plays a crucial role in addressing the behavior of begging. First, it transforms a mindset of resignation and dependence into a rational and self-aware one (Mustaqim, 2017). Second, it increases motivation and work ethic by instilling the values of responsibility, independence, and effort. Third, it addresses psychological and social issues through spiritual approaches (dhikr, prayer, strengthening faith) to strengthen mental resilience. Fourth, it encourages concrete behavioral changes such as seeking employment and developing skills. Fifth, it serves a preventive and empowering function through community education, moral development, and programs for marginalized groups, in line with the perspective of social pathology (Maton, 2008).

Islamic counseling can also be delivered through various methods, such as Islamic-based Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), which emphasizes finding practical solutions and strengthening individual potential in a relatively short time (Fidya & Masril, 2024). Thus, Islamic counseling plays a strategic role in addressing begging behavior by addressing the

root of the problem holistically, encompassing spiritual, psychological, and social aspects. This approach not only helps individuals escape begging but also fosters independent, productive, and dignified individuals.

METHODS

Researchers in this study used a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. (Rukin, 2019; Sugiyono, 2017). This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth description of the phenomena of poverty and begging behavior, and to analyze solutions offered from an Islamic Guidance and Counseling perspective. The study focuses on the social context of Palangkaraya City, Central Kalimantan, taking into account cultural characteristics, community conditions, and the dynamics of the problems faced by beggars.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data (Nasution, 2023; Safrudin et al., 2023). Primary data were obtained through direct interviews with two beggars in Palangkaraya City: A (male, 54 years old) and T (female, 58 years old). Secondary data were obtained from various written sources, including scientific articles, journals, reference books, and reports relevant to the research topic. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and field documentation.

Data analysis uses an ongoing interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, researchers employ triangulation techniques by comparing various sources and data collection methods to obtain more valid and reliable results (Creswell, 2013; Suwendra, 2018).

RESULTS

The Phenomenon of Beggars as a Social Fact

The phenomenon of begging in urban areas remains a complex social problem, influenced by a range of factors, particularly economic conditions. In Palangkaraya City, beggars are often seen at several strategic points, prompting the community and local authorities to take action. The results of direct interviews from several information researchers found in the field in Palangkaraya City, according to Mr. A (45 years old) and Mrs. T (48 years old). They beg due to difficult economic conditions, which is also in line with the case involving Mr. AK (73 years old) and his grandson YS (11 years old) on Jalan S.

Parman, where they were forced to ask for money. Then, Mr. AK and his grandson were found by the Palangkaraya Public Order Agency (Satpol PP), who had arrested beggars in May 2024. Then, a case that occurred in April 2024 involved beggars frequently wearing clown costumes, especially before Eid al-Fitr. In addition, cases were found in March 2025. Data updates from the social services department indicated that 12 beggars had been arrested in front of the Nurul Islam mosque, which showed fluctuations in the field (Dinas Sosial Kota Palangka Raya, 2024).

Begging falls under the category of social deviance because it contradicts society's core values , which prioritize independence, work ethic, and personal responsibility. Beggars are often considered a marginalized group experiencing social dysfunction, a situation in which an individual fails to fulfill the social roles and functions expected by their community (Pradana & Fadilah, 2022). Beggars tend to have a mindset that views begging as the quickest, easiest, and most practical way to earn money without requiring intense physical or intellectual effort. They prefer shortcuts to the effort or the development of skills needed to earn a living (Rohmawati, 2024).

A psychological perspective suggests that they lack a strong will to maximize their potential. Their limited abilities do not motivate them to learn; instead, they justify their continued dependence on others' compassion. As a result, passivity and acceptance of the situation emerge (Rohmawati, 2024). The social pathology perspective highlights the main characteristic, which is a decline in self-esteem and a loss of shame. According to social norms, begging is considered demeaning, but for beggars, it has become commonplace and accepted. They often feel helpless and hopeless, and are aware of their low self-worth in society's eyes (Arifuddin, 2017).

Based on data and observations, not all beggars are in dire straits. Some make this activity a permanent source of livelihood or profession. This phenomenon reflects a failure to internalize values, leading to the abandonment of legitimate and productive work in favor of consumptive activities and dependence on others. Sociologists refer to this condition as cultural poverty, namely, poverty not solely caused by economic factors but by a mindset and lifestyle that tend towards laziness, wastefulness, and begging. Without a change in these mindsets, this social deviation will continue to persist and become a difficult social problem to overcome (Palikhah, 2017).

The characteristics of beggars include physical, behavioral, social, and psychological signs that can be observed directly or indirectly to identify the group. Based on sociological theory and field observations, the characteristics of beggars can be classified in terms of external appearance.

They often wear tattered, dirty, and unkempt clothing. This condition can be intentional or a result of life circumstances, intended to evoke pity and empathy from the people they pass through. Most display physical disabilities, appear weak and sick, or have deformed bodies to appear more pitiful. However, in contemporary society, some beggars dress neatly and cleanly, even wearing special costumes (e.g., clown costumes) to attract attention and gain greater sympathy (Nilta et al., 2023).

Covering a wide age range, from children to adults to older people, they are exploited for begging. They proactively approach others in public places, such as traffic lights, markets, shopping centers, and mosques or places of worship. They demonstrate a high level of dependence on others, lack independent efforts, and make begging a daily routine. On some occasions, they act shamelessly, such as following pedestrians, grabbing onto clothing or vehicles, and using force to obtain money or food.

The majority have low levels of education, with many having never attended school or being illiterate, thus limiting their access to suitable employment. They lack specialized skills or life skills that could be utilized as a legitimate source of livelihood (Fitria et al., 2025). They often lack permanent and adequate housing. They typically reside under bridges, in terminals, stations, or other inhumane open spaces. They have very low self-confidence and feel worthless in society's eyes. They view poverty as an inevitable fate, so they tend to be passive and reluctant to make efforts to improve their situation. They are more inclined to blame circumstances, their surroundings, or others for their poverty than to engage in introspection and rise above it. The most prominent psychological characteristic is that the sense of shame in begging has disappeared and is considered normal and commonplace (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014).

Factors Causing Begging

The underlying causes of begging are complex and cannot be understood from a single perspective. This phenomenon arises from the interaction between an individual's internal state and their external environment. Theoretically, these factors can be classified into two main groups: internal and external factors. These factors arise from the individual's psychological state, attitudes, and mindset. Despite economic hardship, not everyone chooses to beg; the individual's personality therefore plays a key role (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

From a social pathology perspective, this is a major factor. Many individuals prefer begging because it is seen as a simpler, quicker, and less physically or mentally demanding way to

earn a living than working hard. They tend to have a mindset that expects big results without going through a long process. These individuals mistakenly believe they are incapable of any job, lack skills, and will never achieve success or prosperity. This irrational mindset leads them to believe their bad luck is a fixed, inevitable condition, and to give up without trying. A lack of self-confidence makes them feel worthless, weak, and unfit to compete in the workforce. A lack of understanding of religious and moral values prevents them from realizing that begging actually demeans their human dignity and honor (Nawmy & Mannan, 2016).

Extreme poverty and the inability to meet basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter) are the main drivers. Without assets or income, many resort to begging to survive. Limited education hinders access to decent employment. Low levels of education, coupled with limited skills, make it difficult for them to compete in the labor market. Limited job opportunities further exacerbate their situation. In some areas, begging has become a tradition or a hereditary profession, considered normal. Negative social environments also play a role, leading individuals to beg after seeing their peers do so. Even more worrying is the practice of exploitation by syndicates or certain parties who exploit others, children, or older people for profit (Hasibuan, 2023).

According to social pathology theory, begging behavior arises from a mismatch between the goals society desires (namely, well-being and independence) and the means or abilities individuals possess. When individuals feel unable to achieve these goals through legitimate means (such as working), they tend to deviate from or violate social norms (e.g., by begging) to meet their economic needs (Festré, 2010). This condition reflects a "disease" in the individual's social and mental structure that requires appropriate treatment.

The presence of beggars in public spaces is not merely a humanitarian issue but has become a profound social problem. From a social pathology perspective, this phenomenon is viewed as a virus or disease that can spread and disrupt the harmonious, orderly fabric of social life. Beggars roaming highways, traffic lights, traditional markets, or places of worship often cause anxiety. They often approach, follow, or even touch vehicles or pedestrians' clothing. As a result, this reduces comfort, reduces driver concentration, and risks triggering safety disturbances and traffic accidents. In terms of appearance, beggars' shabby, dirty, and untidy clothing tends to tarnish the city's or the surrounding area's aesthetics. This condition creates the perception that the area is shabby, disorganized, and poorly maintained. Especially in tourist areas or city centers, this can damage the area's reputation and attractiveness to the general public and tourists alike.

The phenomenon of begging rarely exists in isolation but is often accompanied by other

social issues, such as some parties exploiting the situation to commit theft, petty robbery, or fraud. The practice of exploiting children, older people, or people with disabilities by beggar syndicates for profit is increasingly widespread. Lack of personal hygiene among beggars can spread infectious diseases in public spaces. If left unchecked, the habit of begging can foster a mindset that life can be lived effortlessly. The impact is highly detrimental because this pattern can spread to others or be passed down to future generations (such as the children of beggars), thereby creating a culture of dependency that is reluctant to take initiative and always relies on the mercy of others (Fitri, 2019).

Indonesian society is known for its tradition of cooperation and strong empathy. However, professional beggars often exploit this sense of compassion and the tradition of almsgiving. As a result, groups who truly deserve help (such as people experiencing poverty who are reluctant to beg) are marginalized, as public assistance is channeled to those who rely on begging for a living. Current approaches to dealing with beggars have generally been administrative or repressive, such as enforcement operations by the Public Order Agency (Satpol PP). However, this approach has proven ineffective in permanently addressing the root of the problem, as beggars often return after being dispersed. Therefore, a more holistic, humanistic strategy is needed that addresses the essence of the problem, namely, through Islamic counseling integrated with behavior modification techniques.

DISCUSSION

Islamic Counseling Guidance (*Bimbingan Konseling Islam*/BKI) as a Solution

BKI aims to transform individuals' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors to become independent, productive, and possess high self-esteem. This essential initial stage involves the counselor explaining the Islamic perspective on the law and status of begging. Islam forbids and condemns the practice of begging except in extreme emergencies with no other alternatives. Islam glorifies hard work and prohibits total dependence on others. The goal is to raise the client's awareness that begging demeans human dignity as a creation and servant of God (Green, 2015). In the second stage, the intervention focuses on transforming the client's thinking from irrational, negative thinking to logical, positive thinking grounded in faith. As an illustration, the client's perception of inability is transformed into the belief that every human being is created with different potentials and that God has determined sustenance for those who are willing to strive. This approach emphasizes that sustenance is God's will, while humans are obligated to strive to

the maximum. Thus, the desired results will not be achieved without sincere effort (Stanley, 2000).

The third stage, after the mindset transformation, focuses on training actual behavior through positive reinforcement techniques (Reinforcement), which provide rewards, praise, or encouragement for every progress or change initiative to build self-confidence. Habituation trains discipline, responsibility, and a spirit of hard work through simple skills that generate income, so that clients feel the benefits of their own efforts and become accustomed to independence. Modeling (Modeling) presents real examples of individuals who were once poor but succeeded through perseverance, such as success stories or figures of friends and scholars (Ansori, 2024). The final stage, as a characteristic of Islamic counseling guidance, strengthens faith and piety through in-depth study of the Qur'an and Hadith, regular worship, and dhikr. The goal is to cultivate a healthy, calm heart (*Qolbun Salim*). With strong faith, clients become mentally resilient, are not easily given to, and can surrender to Allah while continuing to strive persistently (tawakkul, not passive surrender) (Najamuddin, 2018).

Poverty is a social condition that is difficult to avoid and often has widespread negative consequences, one of which is the increasing number of individuals who rely on begging as a source of livelihood. This situation generally occurs when a person faces prolonged economic constraints, accompanied by limited access to adequate education and employment. This situation fosters a mindset and habit of relying on others, leading to begging as the most practical way to meet life's needs. As a treatment effort, this study implemented an BKI approach integrated with behavior modification techniques. This approach not only targets visible behavioral changes but also seeks to transform the individual's inner state. The initial stage involves fostering religious awareness so that subjects understand that independence and a work ethic are recommended values. Next, a resigned and surrendered mindset is directed towards a more constructive and responsible one.

This change process is reinforced through the formation of new habits based on behavior modification principles, such as habituation, positive reinforcement, and setting small, achievable goals. The sustainability of these changes is ensured through the reinforcement of spiritual values to sustain the spirit of change. The success of this method is evident in field observations, which recorded a reduction in begging activity. This decrease is not only evident in the number of beggars in public spaces but is also directly observable in two research subjects who previously begged regularly. Both are now rarely seen engaging in this activity, indicating that behavioral change has indeed occurred.

Thus, this study confirms that the problem of begging cannot be resolved solely through material assistance. Comprehensive interventions that address the psychological, moral, and spiritual dimensions are needed. The Islamic Guidance and Counseling approach, combined with behavior modification, has proven effective as a long-term strategy, transforming resignation into independence and enabling individuals to return to productive and dignified lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion outlined above, it can be concluded that begging is a form of social deviance inconsistent with the values of independence and work ethic espoused by society. This phenomenon is not solely caused by economic problems or material limitations, but is more influenced by the individual's internal conditions. These include flawed thinking, a tendency to depend on others, a low desire to strive, and a lack of understanding of religious values. These conditions are further exacerbated by external factors, such as difficulty accessing education, a lack of employment opportunities, and a social environment less conducive to progress. The presence of beggars has negative impacts, both on the individual, who loses self-esteem, and on society, whose comfort and order are disturbed. Addressing this problem will not be effective if only through restrictive measures or the provision of material assistance. A more comprehensive approach is needed that addresses psychological, moral, and spiritual aspects simultaneously (Ichsan et al., 2026). The application of Islamic Guidance and Counseling, accompanied by behavior modification techniques, has proven to be an appropriate and relevant long-term solution. Through stages of increasing awareness, changing mindsets, cultivating positive behaviors, and strengthening faith, this approach can transform passivity and dependence into independence and a sense of self-responsibility. The results of implementing this method are clearly evident in the changes observed among the research subjects, who have begun to abandon begging and seek more productive livelihoods. Therefore, it is recommended that authorities such as the Department of Social Services and educational institutions implement this approach in community empowerment programs. This step is expected to sustainably break the cycle of poverty and the various social problems that accompany it.

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